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COVER DESIGN
BY W. P. McDONALD AND J. DEE WAREHAM
FOR ARMOUR PRIZE COMPETITION. FIRST PRIZE

THE RESULT OF THE ARMOUR PRIZE COMPETITION

In the midst of the perplexing confusion of much paper and many colors which was a part of the influx of material sent to Armour & Company, as entries for their thousand-dollar prize competition for a calendar for 1900, it was a pleasure to find something of true distinction, creative value, and serious intent. The twelve colored reliefs and one for a cover design, the work of W. P. McDonald and J. Dee Wareham, both capable craftsmen in the Rookwood Pottery, held these qualities, with the added novelty of having been executed in potters' clay, and colored as a piece of pottery might have been, but without the finish of the glaze. Their relief is low, and the color does not cover the clay solidly, but simply tints the design, leaving the

buff-gray tone of the material as an important part of the harmony. This work was offered, not to represent the Rookwood Pottery, but as the individual effort of the two artists, and they have worked with such consistent unity that the expression might have been that of but one mind. We congratulate these young Americans for their willingness to experiment with such original and perhaps trying methods for reproduction, and still more upon their success in proving them artistic and practicable enough to gain the glory and the substance of this competition, where the pitiable inability of some and the varied play of assurance in others (whom perfumers and soap-dealers have perhaps flattered) was but a simple index to the great volume of desire greeting the generous offer, which should have been enough to stimulate the most able workers in the field of reproductive art. Not that here and there we did not find very earnest effort, for there were many clever suggestions, well drawn and refined; but the majority did not get beyond the ordinary commercial requirements; the sign of the dollar was too apparently their goal, and not the object to make something strong and significant to herald the beginning of a new century.

The process for reproducing these reliefs will probably be that of lithography, and as they are to appear in *Truth* during the next year as a special attraction, it has not been possible to procure more than the cover design for reproduction here, as, of course, the final result must not be robbed of its freshness.

In developing the work the artists have not spared time or thought in careful research and study for the decorative and historic requirements of their subjects, which have been chosen to play with artistic dignity and charming spirit upon the name of Armour. Twelve armed knights ride through the year in battle array, a surly Northman on a fine white charger leads the procession of warriors, who follow in varying moods, some as light and gay as the summer months they represent, others, to a more serious strain, pass quietly on with the emblems of their seasons. English armor, as it changed through the successive periods of the days of knighthood, is reproduced with beautiful exactness, artistically submissive, and for the examples of the details of these the artists studied the collections in the Tower of London and the British Museum. Most all of the figures are placed in an area of about half a circle, and an appropriate flower arrangement, suggestive of each month's grace, is decoratively placed about them, every plant-form showing the intimate knowledge of nature the designer possesses.

He has used for January the mistletoe, in cold tones of blue and gray, this color harmony spreading over the composition; then for February the pine-cone needles, in a little warmer color scheme; for March, the daffodils, and in the midst of these Sir Knight blows his horn with much gusto. A lovely tone in yellow and green catches

the April sunshine in the next relief, and plays with a rainbow's delicacy over the cuirass and helmet of the horseman, who this time is surrounded by simple dandelions. Altogether this seems to be the most happily conceived of any of the group. The fleur-de-lis was the flower chosen for May, and June is placed in a very gentle harmony with the color of the wild rose as its chief note. Richer hues tint the panel for July, and the columbine, charmingly appreciated, is the flower emblem. August's dreamy mood has the poppy for its motive, and September, with her harvest moon, in a twilight effect, is represented by stalks of corn; the autumn leaves have blown their way into October's decoration, and November holds the much-used, and too often mis-used, chrysanthemum, which this time may be proud of its transplanted glory. The holiday month, with its good cheer, ends the array of seasons, and the rich color of the holly is the keynote of this finale.

In looking at these panels as a group, the gradations of their colors are very effective, as the first six months are a delicate blending of soft yellows, greens, lavender, and pink, while through the others the darker combining of blue, purple, reds, and greens balance the significant harmony; these last seem in places a little heavy in value. There is a dusty haziness of color peculiar to this work, where the body material is clay, which gives a mellow charm to the originals, and it will be interesting to see if in the process of reproduction this distinctive attribute can be kept.

The workmanship and artistic construction of the reliefs prove the thorough ability of the designers, and the treatment of the different parts show a fine sense of modeling. The signs of the zodiac, which each knight wears on his helmet, have been created with the most decorative appreciation, and all in all, the endeavor holds a forceful dignity which, through the interests of commerce, has the best artistic intention for its purpose.

The cover design, which in this half-tone gives an idea of the proportion of the panels, though perhaps in relief it is a little more bold, depicts the buoyant, unproved aspirations of a young century, ready to leap into a new sphere of power. The decoration is in white against a disk of gold, surrounded by the clear blue of the infinite.

Mr. McDonald and Mr. Dee Wareham are both recognized leaders on the staff of designers in the Rookwood Pottery, and their conceptions known as the "Iris" and "Sea-Green" pottery have a beauty which place them among the really good things of the kind in this country.

M. K.